

subtle, carefully nonlitigious language) his pitch—for treatment of all the disorders we cannot cure (cancer, low back pain, arthritides and the like).

It will be a field day for charlatans; a bleak day for physicians; a black day for patients.

I do not know what the solution is—for helping patients find “good doctors.” The same could be said for good lawyers, good architects and good plumbers. Selecting an expert is always a chancy business, and advertising is not the answer. I suspect that like so many other things in this world, one must do it in the marketplace by trial and error. Admittedly in the case of medicine this is risky. What we have is far from ideal, but the alternatives are far worse.

Let us hope the FTC weighs all factors before further propagating this simplistic solution to a difficult problem.

ROBERT H. MOSER, MD
Philadelphia

Quality of Life

TO THE EDITOR: The quality of a physician's work is a reflection of the philosophy and ideas that motivate him. We have been told by great and noble men that reverence for life should be our guiding star. So we must ask the question, What is *life*? Is it a cell or group of cells carrying on the functions of respiration, digestion and excretion? Does it include bacteria, the prolific plankton of the seas, the hordes of insects that populate our planet, the rats and the mice that eat the farmers' grain, the fowl of the air and the beasts of the field? Do we worship at the throne of biology?

Nature has proven to be a wanton prodigal with much hatching and mitosing to permit the survival of a few samples of living things that in turn go about the business of reproduction in the endless cycle of living and dying. All of this activity is going on in a frenetic pattern often far below the level of awareness or intelligence. Is it really this physiologic activity that demands our allegiance and honor or is there something more important that demands our respect and obeisance? At what level of existence does life become meaningful and worthy of preservation? There is one product out of all this yeasty, budding, dividing and multiplying that demands reverence and enjoins our efforts at preservation. That product is intelligence—the

ability to learn, evaluate, understand and love. Take it away and life is meaningless.

The real issue then is not whether we stepped on an ant, or swatted a fly, or ate a cow, but whether we ply our art or practice our trade or live our lives with intelligent compassionate understanding. Don't you agree, Dr. Schweitzer, wherever you are?

In our calling as physicians we are responsible to the human organism in a singular and peculiar way. We are concerned with the management of function of the biological machine. Like a mechanic with an oil-can and a wrench we tenderly grease and tighten the functioning parts, some physical, some psychic. We do not create intelligence nor do we assure quality to life. We service the machinery whereby man with his intelligence can find quality in life and for each man the quality goal may be different. To paraphrase an old bromide:

The physician says to man be free
Choose your life and what you will be
But this eternal truth is given
Life on earth is rarely Heaven
When vim and vigor become depleted
Doctor is in: Please be seated.

ORD L. SHUMWAY, MD
Hemet, California

Medicine Should Lead

TO THE EDITOR: THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE has an impressive record in addressing political, social and philosophical issues in the past few months.¹⁻⁴ I am very happy that the WESTERN JOURNAL has had the courage to address controversial areas. It is hard to see concrete change on the basis of editorializing. It is the more unfortunate because, as you have pointed out, physicians are still the most highly respected professionals in the United States. As a group, physicians are highly intelligent, articulate and well trained. Why, then, the irony that physicians are a weaker political force than, say, the Teamsters' union? Actually, it is fairly apparent. Training to be a physician leaves little time for political activity and even less for keeping up in the Arts. (It is a marvel that so many physicians manage to have outside talents, in spite of this.) Once through with training, now that a nonpolitical pattern has been established, physicians seldom get politically involved. Of course, a busy medical